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less," and a charming "Familiar Epistle to a Friend," by James Russell Lowell; "Pioneering," by Caroline H. Dall; "The Haunted Window," by T. W. Higginson; "Katharine Hall," continued, by the author of "Herman;" "Timon's Soliloquy," by T. Buchanan Read; "The Claudian Emissary," by Theodore Bacon; "A Winter Adventure on the Prairie;" "Travel in the United States," by Bayard Taylor, and two articles, one "The United States Sanitary Commission," by E. E. Hale, and "Considerations of University Reform," by John Fiske, which will be read with great interest, together with the usual Reviews and Literary Notices. This April number is singularly excellent in all its departments, and reflects credit upon the editorial judgment.

OUR YOUNG FOLKS, Ticknor & Fields, for April, comes very welcome, although it is a spring visitor, and all the signs of winter still linger here with us. The contents exhibit the usual pleasing, interesting and instructive variety, indicating careful and intelligent selection by the editors, whose labors have been appreciated by the young far and wide over the country. It is one of the most valuable contributions to the literature for youth that is now issued from the American press. The articles are as follows: "Good Old Times," continued, by Elijah Kellogg; "Lessons in Magic," No. 9, by P. H. C.; "Our Violet Girl," by H. E. B.; "A Child's Question," by Kate Putnam; "Pussy Willow Blossoms," by H. B. Stowe; "Round the World Joe," continued, by George Eager; "Jack's Jack-knife," by Helen C. Weeks; "Where the Elves came from," by Anna M. Lea; "Going Halves," by Margaret Eyttinge; "Football and Hockey," by C. J. Foster; "A Story of an Apple-tree," by Mrs. Anna M. Wells; "The Song of the Robin," by Emily Huntington Miller, music by J. R. Thomas, with the general articles, "Round the Evening Lamp," and "Our Letter Box."

The illustrations are very numerous, and are ably and spirited drawn and well cut. The artists are Harry Fenn, G. G. White, Miss E. B. Greene, and S. Eyttinge, Jr. The May number will possess special attractions, among them a new long-shore story, "Too Far Out," with a full page illustration by that celebrated artist, W. J. Linton; further adventures by "Round the World Joe;" "A Modern Cinderella," "Ruby's Visitor," and "A May Song," by J. R. Thomas. Our young folks must keep special watch for the May number of "Our Young Folks."

THE INITIALS; A story of Modern Life. By the Baroness TAUPHÉUS. Philadelphia, T. B. Peterson & Bros.

This novel is somewhat in the style of the writings of Frederika Bremer; it brings into strong relief all the minor details of the every-day life of the actors in the drama. But the tone of this work is stronger and healthier than we find in the works of the Swedish authoress; it has little or none of the sentimentalities which abound in her works, and which enfeeble much of the current literature of Germany. The plot of "Initials" is clear and well defined; the incidents follow naturally, and there is in no part any straining after effect. It gives a clear insight into the inner life of the Germans, exhibiting social usages which are both curious and interest-

ing. There is no exaggerated coloring, for the authoress, though a lady of distinguished English birth, seems to have become thoroughly Germanized, by her long residence in that country, and shows a perfect familiarity and sympathy with the customs and manners of the people.

The characters are all life-like. The men and women are all human, and possess the small weaknesses and the large faults which belong to humanity. The elaboration of these characters reveals a profound and minute knowledge of human nature, and of the subtle motives which prompt and govern human actions. Nature is displayed in all its perversities, and the countless ills and sorrows with which every life is overshadowed, are traced to their first causes—want of candor, distrust, hasty judgments, conclusions drawn rather from passion than from reason. All this is illustrated by the simple incidents of daily life, and by the conversations which accompany the actions and develop the story, freed from all the labored philosophical disquisitions, which are entirely out of character in a work of this description.

All the characters are strongly defined, presenting a variety for which every community affords materials. There are many beautiful passages descriptive of the mountain scenery, so clearly and boldly written, that they picture the scene distinctly to the eye in all its features of grandeur or rural loveliness.

The story is deeply interesting, the language is graceful and graphic, and it is hardly possible to lay aside without finishing, a work so amusing, attractive and instructive.

#### THE BREAK IN THE HUMAN VOICE.

So much vocal, respiratory, and bronchial disturbance has arisen from misapprehension of this important subject by the public speaker, vocalist, and teacher of singing, that I venture to claim for its investigation the attention of the medical professor and physiologist.

Before we can approach its detailed consideration, we must notice the characteristics of a *perfect Voice*. These may be classified under five heads: Quality of tone, volume of tone, extent of compass, evenness of the scale, and power of control.

Notwithstanding great musical aptitude and perseverance, many vocalists remain forever deficient in *all* these particulars, and the most accomplished artists are commonly wanting in some one or other of them.

The greatest obstacle in their path is the "*Break in the Voice*," for it prevents the perfect development of the five before-named requirements of a finished singer. The Break is an impediment dividing the scale in various ways, differing with the individual—sometimes by gaps of two or three notes—by weak parts—by abrupt contrasts of tone—by contracted compass—by want of control over particular notes. These are all recognized forms of the *Break*; but I purpose to show that it is a far more comprehensive evil and includes many other vocal defects hitherto treated as distinctive, but which arise from the same cause and are amenable to the same treatment; such, for instance, as difficulty of breath-

ing, bad qualities of tone, feeble and uneven delivery of the voice, sudden coughing and hoarseness, loss of sustaining power, gradual attenuation and loss of tone, want of flexibility and control, yet worst of all, early loss of voice.

A perfect vocal scale is a musical necessity, and to make it perfect is the great object of vocal professors; for scarcely a pupil commences to practice singing whose voice does not present some form or other and *too often* several forms of the Break. A legion of theories have been invented and practised by vocal professors to combat this difficulty, a detailed consideration of which would only occupy our time, without helping us to a solution of the problem,—theories which divide the scale into registers, chest voice, throat voice, head voice, falsetto voice, contraltino voice,—theories in contravention to all known physiological laws,—theories attempting exactly to detail the action of organs never yet seen in operation,—theories utterly subversive of the ordinary routine of muscular development, and which cannot be referred to any anatomical principle whatever,—theories astoundingly elaborate, vague and mysterious, inducing the belief that the due performance of a natural function is not implanted by nature, but is something occult and almost metaphysical,—theories which in substance assert, that although endowed with a vocal mechanism the most perfect and complete, we are (with rare exceptions) denied its use,—theories which *dare* attribute to nature the failures resulting from their own short-sighted inventions. In a word, all these theories and the treatment founded upon them, amount simply to an assumption that "the Break" in the human voice is structural and organic.

This inference is derived from the fact that the Break is an all but universal evil, and attempts to remove it yield nothing but complete or partial failure, except in very favored individuals. But if the Break in the voice be structural, then we are driven to the conclusion that *imperfection* is the normal condition of the vocal organs, and are therefore exceptions to the marvellous harmony and design of the human system in general. Again, if the Break be structural or organic, its modification must be bounded by very circumscribed limits and its complete removal impossible. Any attempt to remove or modify it must be, at best, of very doubtful expediency.

That the structural argument is a glaring fallacy it is my special object to show: for despite past failure, the complete removal of the Break is possible, and that too by means remarkable for simplicity and safety. There is nothing occult, nothing mysterious—there is no occasion for elaborate vocal anatomical treatises—there is no necessity to distress and alarm pupils with vague and burdensome precautions. All that is required is the *persevering* practice of the lower notes of the voice in a rapid percussive manner by means of exercises, which induce also a frequent change and supply of air in the lungs. The effect of exercises so constructed is gradually to remove from the vocal organs any superabundant mucous or chronic matter which may impede their perfect action. The Break begins to move simultaneously with the movement of chronic deposits, and disappears altogether on their final expul-